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ABSTRACT

Although research on children of alcoholics indicates that they are at high risk for later problem drinking, the etiological dynamics associated with this heightened risk status are not yet understood. This study compared the alcohol-related beliefs of subjects who possessed close relatives with alcohol problems with alcohol-related beliefs of subjects who possessed no such relatives. Subjects included college students (N=32) who reported having a mother or father who had experienced problems with alcohol or alcoholism and students (N=32) who reported no such parent. Subjects completed questionnaires on demographics, frequency of alcohol consumption, the presence or absence of a problem drinking relative, and alcohol-related beliefs. Results indicated that alcohol-related beliefs could be used to differentiate students who came from families with alcoholic relatives from those students who came from problem-free families. No significant differences were found in drinking frequencies of the two groups. Further research is currently underway to delineate the interaction of family dynamics and beliefs about alcohol's effects, alcoholism, and perceptions of vulnerability to alcoholism. (ABL)

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# Alcoholic Relatives and Their Impact On Alcohol-Related Beliefs

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Abstract

The present study compared the alcohol-related beliefs of a group of subjects who had close relatives with alcohol problems and a group of subjects who had no such relatives. Results indicated that specific constellations of beliefs were differentially adhered to by the two groups. In addition, a discriminant analysis was able to distinguish the two groups using belief constellations and demographic variables.

2. Title : Alcoholic Relatives and Their Impact on Alcohol-Related Beliefs

3. Major Purpose : Although research on children of alcoholics indicates that they are at high risk for later problem drinking (Lord, 1983 and Russell, et. al., 1984), we do not as yet understand the etiological dynamics associated with this heightened risk status. The present research was designed to examine the role of alcohol-related beliefs as mediators of this family-based dynamic. More specifically, the research compared the alcohol-related beliefs of subjects who possessed close relatives with alcohol problems with subjects who possessed no such relatives. We predicted that not only would subjects with drinking-problem relatives drink more frequently than the no-problem subjects, but that they would also possess more positive beliefs about ethanol and its subjective effects.

4. Subjects . Subjects were 32 college students (18 males and 14 females) who reported having a close relative (eg. mother or father) who had experienced problems with alcohol or alcoholism and 32 students (17 females and 15 males) who reported having no such relative. All students were enrolled in one of two Catholic undergraduate colleges in a large metropolitan area.

5. Procedure . Subjects completed a series of questionnaires during class time. Among these were a demographic questionnaire which provided the following information: Sex of subject, ethnicity, age, year in school, major, frequency of alcohol consumption during the past 30 day period, and presence or absence of problem drinking relative. In

addition, subjects completed an alcohol-related beliefs questionnaire which provided information about their beliefs with regard to the effects of ethanol ingestion. Items were grouped to provide scores on the extent to which subjects believed that alcohol ingestion led to positive or negative social outcomes, positive or negative emotional outcomes and positive or negative disinhibition.

6. Results . Surprisingly, no significant difference was found in the drinking frequencies of the two groups of subjects ($X=8.1$, $SD=4.6$ for the problem-relative group and $X=6.9$, $SD=5.7$ for the no problem group ). Analyses of the belief data revealed the following findings: In comparison with infrequent drinking students, frequent drinking students believed that alcohol consumption led to more positive emotional outcomes ($t=7.81$, $df=60$, $p<.001$) and that such consumption was also less associated with negative emotional outcomes ($t=7.51$, $df=60$, $p<.001$). In addition results showed that students with a problem-drinking relative believed that alcohol consumption was associated with more negative emotional outcomes than students with no such relative.

A discriminant analysis was performed to compare the drinking-relative and no drinking-relative groups along the following dimensions: Ethnicity, sex, emotional outcomes (negative and positive) and positive and negative inhibition. The canonical correlation was .44 with an eigenvalue of .243; the chi square value was 12.29 with 5 degrees of freedom and was significant at <.03. The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients were sex= -.39, drinking frequency=.34, negative emotional outcomes=.77, positive emotional

outcomes=.95, and disinhibition negative= -.74.

7. Conclusion . Results indicate that alcohol-related beliefs could be used to differentiate students who came from families with alcoholic relatives from those students who came from problem free families. Further research is currently underway to further delineate the interaction of family dynamics and beliefs about alcohol's effects, alcoholism, and perceptions of vulnerability to alcoholism.

8. References .

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